

Arches



National Park
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Student Information



Arches National Park contains the largest concentration of natural stone openings in the world. Over 2000 arches and windows, as well as many delicately carved pinnacles, spires and strangely shaped rocks make up the scenery in this land of red rocks. Delicate Arch, pictured above, is the most well-known arch. Landscape Arch, located in the park at Devils Garden, stretches over 300 feet in length. Other points of interest include Courthouse Towers, Balanced Rock, and Fiery Furnace and the Windows Section.

Weather

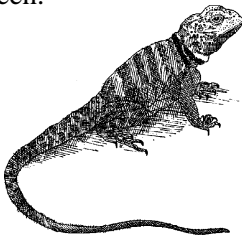
The Park is located in southeastern Utah and is sometimes referred to as a “cool” desert. Winters are cold, with low temperatures sometimes dropping below zero degrees Fahrenheit. Snow-fall averages about 10 inches each year.

Strong winds are common in spring. Summer temperatures often exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit in July and August. Rainfall averages about eight inches per year.

What Animals Live Here?

Most animals in this desert climate are nocturnal; that is, they eat, drink and move about at night. Thirty-nine different kinds of mammals have been sighted in the Park. Mule deer, cotton-tail rabbits, kit fox and ground squirrels are seen frequently. Birds are common certain times of year and in certain locations. Observers have recorded 181 kinds of birds. Common ones include pinyon jays, mountain bluebirds, red-tailed hawks and ravens.

Visitors who leave their cars are almost guaranteed to see lizards! Shy midget-faded rattlesnakes are present, but seldom seen.



Collared Lizard

What Plants Grow Here?



Claret Cup Cactus

Over 300 kinds of plants grow and flourish, in spite of hot temperatures and low rainfall. The most common trees are utah juniper and pinyon pine. Other plants found throughout the park include claret cup cactus (pictured at right), yucca, mormon tea, sagebrush, indian ricegrass, fremont cottonwood, and blackbrush.

Common wildflowers include the sego lily (state flower of Utah), locoweed, mule’s ears (a type of sunflower), indian paintbrush, and globemallow.

Salt, Fins And Arches



The Fiery Furnace

The red rocks of Arches National Park were formed over millions of years, and erosion has carved them into the formations seen today. Important erosional forces include wind and water, very cold and very hot temperatures. Ancient seas covered this region 300 million years ago, and left behind thousands of feet of salt deposits. Later, layers of sand and sediments covered the salt, and were compressed into sedimentary rock. The underground salt moves under the pressure of this overlying rock like toothpaste in a tube. The salt layers were pushed up by this pressure into a giant bubble, or salt dome.

The overlying rocks did not bend as easily as the salt did, and so they

cracked in parallel fractures. Water ran into these cracks and dissolved much of the salt layer below. The rock remained with nothing to hold it up and it collapsed.

Water carried away sand grains, one by one and millions by millions, and widened the cracks into narrow canyons. Today, the thin rock walls between these canyons are called fins, because they look something like a fish's fins. Water in the form of rain and snow enters tiny cracks in the fins, freezes and expands, and causes little pieces of sandstone to flake off. Soon the tiny cracks break through the fin and an arch is formed. This process of arch formation continues today, and many sizes of arches are found throughout the Park.

People At Arches



Petroglyph at Wolfe Ranch

The first people to visit this area were prehistoric Indians. The oldest evidence of human presence found here are stone spearpoints from 10,000 years ago. Early Anasazi and Fremont Indians left panels of petroglyphs and pictographs. When the first European explorers reached this area in the 1700s, they met Ute Indians; petroglyphs on cliffs near Salt Wash show these people on horseback. The first known white explorer who left any records was Denis Julien who carved his name and the date—June 8, 1844—on a rock near Devils

Garden. In 1888, John Wesley Wolfe and his son became the first white settlers. They lived in a cabin in the vicinity of Delicate Arch for 20 years. Today, you can see the preserved cabin and root cellar of Wolfe Ranch.

President Herbert Hoover proclaimed Arches National Monument on April 12, 1929. Interest continued in the red rock formations, and in 1971, Congress approved the designation of Arches as a National Park. On November 2, 1971, President Richard Nixon signed the bill. Today, the park includes 73,379 acres.

You And The National Parks



The National Park Service was created in 1916 to take care of national parks and monuments, and other lands set aside in the National Park system. The National Park Service must protect the scenery and natural and historic objects and the wildlife in the parks, and must provide for the enjoyment of these things by people today and in the future.

Each year, more and more people each year visit our national parks. Now, nearly a million people come to Arches National Park every year. The National Park Service can preserve and protect the resources in parks only with your help.

When you visit parks, treat them gently. Carry your trash home with you, be quiet and listen to the sounds of nature, and stay on the trails. Write your name on a trail register instead of the rocks, and don't feed or bother the wildlife (keep them wild!). Enjoy your parks and leave them as you found them, for others to enjoy.